Claims

1. A method of transmitting encoded data defining a graphic image in the form of a rectangular region within an active video area, characterized in that the pixels forming said region are individually defined by the encoded data, the size and position of said region being included in the encoded data.

2. A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the encoded data for said region further includes a time stamp representing the time at which said region is to be displayed.

3. A method as claimed in claim 2, wherein subsequent encoded data for a given region includes a visibility code to disable the display of said region.

4. A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein a region comprises a plurality of subregions including an identifier code to allow a graphic image defined by said subregion to be referred to by a further region.

5. A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the pixels for a region are encoded as entries of a colour-look-up-table, the encoded data including a compatibility code indicating a required minimum number of entries of said colour-look-up-table.

6. A method as claimed in claim 5, wherein the pixels are defined by n-bit pixel data, the encoded data further including a map table for mapping said n-bit pixel data to a colour-look-up-table having more than 2^n entries.

7. A method as claimed in any of the preceding claims, wherein the encoded data is accommodated in a private transport stream according to the MPEG2 standard or extension thereof.

8. A method of receiving encoded data defining a graphic image in the form of a rectangular region for display within an active video area, characterized by the steps of decoding said encoded data into individual pixels constituting said region, decoding the size and position of said region, storing said pixels, and generating display signals representing said pixels.

9. A method as claimed in claim 8, further comprising the step of decoding a time stamp included in said encoded data, and generating the display signals from a time represented by said time stamp.

10. A method as claimed in claim 9, further comprising the steps of decoding a visibility code included in subsequent encoded data for a given region, and disabling the generation of said display signals for said region in response to said visibility code.

11. A method as claimed in claim 8, wherein a region comprises a plurality of subregions including an identifier code, comprising the step of including said subregion in a further region referring to said subregion.

12. A method as claimed in claim 8, wherein the pixels for a region are encoded as entries of a colour-look-up-table and the encoded data includes a compatibility code indicating a required minimum number of entries of said colour-look-up-table, comprsising the step of disabling the generation of display signals if the required number of entries is less than available.

13. A method as claimed in claim 12, further comprising the steps of receiving map table data, and storing said map table data in a map table for mapping n-bit pixel data to a colour-look-up-table having more than 2^n entries.

14. A method as claimed in any of claims 8-13, wherein the video signal is encoded according to an MPEG2 standard or extension thereof, and wherein the encoded data defining the graphic image is accommodated in packets of an MPEG2 private transport stream.

15. A transmitter comprising means for transmitting encoded data defining a graphic image in the form of a rectangular region within an active video area, characterized by means for encoding the individual pixels forming said region and including the size and position of said region in the encoded data.

16. A receiver coupled to a display screen for receiving encoded data defining a graphic image in the form of a rectangular region within an active video area, characterized by means for decoding said encoded data into individual pixels constituting said region, means for decoding the size and position of said region, and display means for storing and displaying said pixels.

17. An image signal comprising encoded data defining a graphic image in the form of a rectangular region within an active video area, characterized in that the pixels forming said region are individually defined by the encoded data, the size and position of said region being included in the encoded data.

18. A storage medium on which an image signal is stored comprising encoded data defining a graphic image in the form of a rectangular region within an active video area, characterized in that the pixels forming said region are individually defined by the encoded data, the size and position of said region being included in the encoded data.